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COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS
OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 198th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 21 May 1993, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. CISSE (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE ON THE UNITED NATIONS SEMINAR ON ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, HELD AT UNESCO HEADQUARTERS FROM 26 TO 29 APRIL 1993

2. The CHAIRMAN, reporting on the Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People held at UNESCO headquarters from 26 to 29 April 1993, said that the Committee had convened the Seminar in response to General Assembly resolution 47/170 of 22 December 1992 and as part of its ongoing concern with mobilizing international assistance to promote the independent development of the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem.

3. The Seminar had provided a framework for an exchange of views on various aspects of assistance to the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and for sharing the experience gained by sectors of the international community in their efforts in that regard. Participants in the Seminar had included United Nations agencies already involved in projects in the occupied Palestinian territory, donor countries, regional organizations, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations active in the field, and Palestinian and other experts.

4. The deliberations had been marked by a clear understanding of and commitment to the purpose of the Seminar, and by a spirit of cooperation and determination to achieve tangible results. Participants had expressed concern over the hardships faced by the Palestinian people under occupation and had called upon the occupying Power to end its violations of Palestinian rights and to respect its obligations under international instruments and United Nations resolutions. They had stressed that the international community should do its utmost to ensure the protection of the Palestinian people living under occupation and that international assistance should be provided and targeted in such a way as to loosen the grip of the occupation.

5. The Committee's delegation had been greatly encouraged by the desire expressed by many participants for more efficient coordination of activities among the various sectors of the international community, and between them and the Palestinian leadership, in order to respond better to current and emerging needs, and it wished to express its full support for any efforts in that regard.

6. The Seminar had highlighted a growing perception by the international community that a threshold had been reached in the long history of the Palestinian question, and that the Palestinian people would soon be able to take charge of its own future and make its own economic and political decisions. Participants had expressed the view that a comprehensive Palestinian national development plan would be a major factor in achieving the independent development of the Palestinian people. There was need for greater coordination between the various donors and agencies of the United Nations system, on the one hand, and the Palestinian central authority, on the other, and for an overall

(The Chairman)

strategy framework to be elaborated to guide their work. In that connection, they had welcomed the introduction of the Palestine Development Programme (PDP) and the explanations that had been given about it.

7. The Seminar had also noted the experience of various organizations in the area of coordination and the suggestions as to possible mechanisms for promoting such coordination. There had been general agreement that that question urgently required further discussion at an appropriate level by all concerned in order to promote the more efficient use of the limited resources on the international community. The Committee had therefore been asked to convene a meeting of representatives of United Nations organizations and officials of the Palestine Liberation Organization to consider appropriate mechanisms for coordinating and channelling assistance and to establish priorities.

8. The participants, finally, had commended the Committee on its convening of the Seminar and had considered that the wide-ranging and constructive participation had greatly contributed to its success.

9. Mr. FARHADI (Afghanistan) said that, while many studies had been undertaken of the legal and political aspects of the Palestinian question, there had been a dearth of reviews of the economic problems facing the Palestinians in the occupied territories. He therefore welcomed the convening of the recent Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, which had permitted an exchange of views on that question on the basis of which a valuable report had been prepared.

10. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) said that the Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People had been an important event, marked by thorough preparation and wide participation by States Members and subsidiary bodies of the Organization as well as by experts. Participants had reviewed the economic situation in the occupied territories and had stressed the need for the economic development of Palestine.

11. It was equally important, however, to follow up the work done at the Seminar. A major objective of such follow-up action should be to secure recognition by Israel of all United Nations organizations and specialized agencies operating in the occupied territories. It was also important to ensure proper coordination between United Nations agencies under the direct control of the Secretary-General, who had the legal and political responsibility for the situation in the occupied territories. The worsening political and economic situation in the occupied territories placed a special responsibility on the Committee to achieve its goal of observance of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

12. The CHAIRMAN said that he would take it that the Committee wished to take note of the report of the Seminar.

13. It was so decided.

OTHER MATTERS

14. The CHAIRMAN said that Ambassador Camilleri, the Rapporteur of the Committee, who had been elected to his position on 7 October 1991, would be returning to his country to take up a new assignment. On behalf of the Committee, he wished to convey to Ambassador Camilleri his deepest gratitude and appreciation for the invaluable contribution which he had made to the Committee's work during his tenure of office as Rapporteur.

15. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine), joined by Mr. HIDALGO BASULTO (Cuba) and Ms. VASISHI (India), paid tribute to the valuable contribution which the outgoing Rapporteur had made to the work of the Committee.

16. Mr. CAMILLERI (Rapporteur) said that his period of service to the Committee had been both challenging and rewarding. The Committee made a valuable contribution towards promoting greater awareness of the political, legal and humanitarian issues involved in the Palestinian question. While the tool of diplomacy was an imperfect one in the pursuit of international peace and security, the alternatives were too costly in terms of human sacrifice and were ineffective in the long term. His Government appreciated the efforts of the Palestinian people in pursuit of a peaceful solution and at the same time understood their frustrations. He hoped that the Committee would continue its valuable work on behalf of the Palestinian cause.

17. Mr. TLILI (Department of Public Information) briefed the Committee on some of the work of the Department of Public Information in the framework of the General Assembly resolution instructing it to conduct a special information programme on the question of Palestine. A conference on that question had taken place in Athens on 27-28 April 1993. Its theme was "Jerusalem: Visions of Reconciliation" with emphasis on the city's sovereignty, municipal responsibilities and tangible confidence-building measures. The event, designed to help to find a comprehensive, just and lasting peace settlement for the Middle East, had been opened by the Greek Minister for Foreign Affairs, with representatives of the Greek media, members of the foreign press, expert observers, members of the diplomatic corps, panellists and high-level representatives of Palestine and Israel in attendance.

18. From 9 to 11 June 1993, a conference would be held in London at the invitation and with the support and sponsorship of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom. Its theme was the culture of peace in the Middle East. Delegations from both Palestine and Israel would be present along with media representatives from all Europe, Israel and Palestine.

19. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) reported on recent political developments in the Middle East and the latest round of peace negotiations in Washington. The Committee had already been informed of the decision of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to participate in the ninth series of bilateral discussions, despite the difficulty of continuing the process resulting from practices and measures of Israel regarding the Palestinian people. Those included the expulsion of 400 citizens, further repression in the occupied territories and the closing of borders, which was a collective punishment designed to prevent communication between various areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. During the last round of negotiations, it had become clear that Israel's intention was to block progress. That had been shown by its

(Mr. Al-Kidwa, Observer, Palestine)

unwillingness to do anything more than readmit 30 of the 400 expelled people. No solution had been found for the problem of southern Lebanon, no progress had been achieved in the area of human rights, and the borders remained closed. Israel had, apparently, totally rejected the negotiating process. In light of that rejection, the PLO had reduced its negotiators from 11 to 3 but, in a spirit of cooperation, had put forth new proposals.

20. Having received assurances and promises from the Government of the United States that it would help to pursue a peaceful settlement, the Palestine Liberation Organiration had agreed to continue its participation in the peace negotiations. With the objective of establishing a framework of principles for bilateral negotiations, it had agreed to the establishment of three subcommittees to deal with concepts, land and water matters, and human rights.

21. The PLO had then learned of renewed cooperation and prior coordination between Israel and the United States at the highest levels. That collusion negated the very idea of the United States sponsorship of the negotiations since its position was clearly not neutral.

22. In essence, Palestine wanted Israel to recognize the need for a partnership over the West Bank and Gaza and over the natural land and water resources of the region. What was needed was a legal and political basis for an agreement adopted in accordance with international law as embodied in the Charter of the United Nations.

23. Political will on the part of the Security Council in that area was evidently lacking. The Council had taken no effective action on Palestine, in contrast to its record in other regions of the world confronted by different crises. Although the Security Council had been the object of similar accusations before, Palestine felt it was necessary to insist that it should assume its responsibilities towards the situation in the occupied territories.

24. The CHAIRMAN said that, although progress in the peace process had been slow, room for measured optimism remained.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.